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Three Plays

Bernard Sobel

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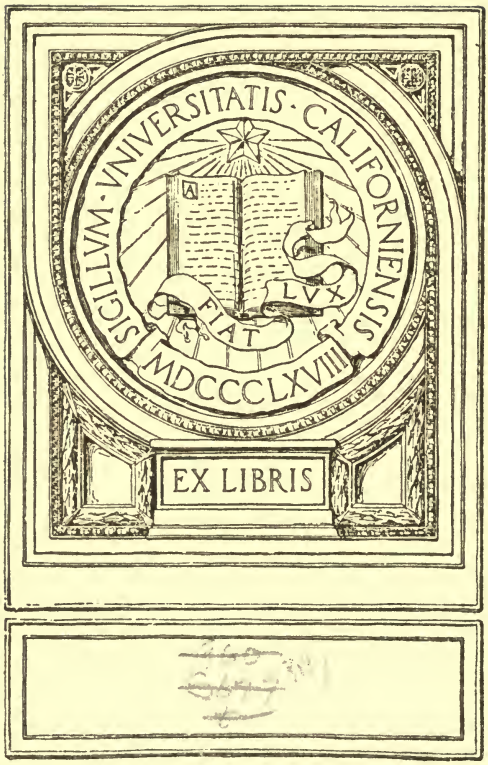
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Three Plays

BY

Bernard Sobel

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To My Sister
Lorraine Sobel

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JENNIE KNOWS

CASTE

MARY FOSTER

HUGH FOSTER, *her father*

BOB RAGLAN, *her admirer*

BUCKNER PACKINGTON (*a renowned pianist*)

JENNIE KITMAN, *a musical enthusiast*

ROSE WEBER, *her friend, who is socially someone*

AGATHA BAKER, *who is up in art*

CARRIE BUDD, *an amateur poet*

LYDIA BUDD, *another musical enthusiast*

JENNIE KNOWS

Scene: Drawing room in the Foster home. The room is attractive because of its air of simplicity and culture. At the rear there is a comfortable window seat which is at the foot of a short flight of stairs. A parlor grand piano stands at the left. The general entrance is in the further corner at the left.

Curtain rises disclosing MARY FOSTER. *She walks to front of room with a roll of manuscript which she unwraps and then studies carefully. After a moment, she takes out her handkerchief and weeps softly.*

Enter MR. FOSTER.

[*He looks around, sees* MARY *weeping, notices the manuscripts lying on the floor, and then shakes his head sadly. Then he walks over to her and gently places his hand on her head.*]

FOSTER. What's the matter, my little girl—you're not crying are you? You're not crying?

MARY. [*After a moment she looks up, smiles and says*] Yes father, I am. I'm foolish, I know.

I ought to be accustomed to rejected manuscripts by this time, don't you think so?

FOSTER. Perhaps some day my dear, you'll be successful and—

MARY. No don't make yourself say that. You've lost confidence in me too, like all the rest. I guess Jennie Kitman has been right about me all this time. I can't write real good music, and never will be able to.

FOSTER. I hate to think that she could be right.

MARY. [*With spirit*] And I do too, but—well things seem to be coming out as she said. Manuscripts coming back all the time. Nothing but failure. Why, I'm even beginning to lose confidence in myself.

FOSTER. My poor little girl. If you could only make up your mind not to be so ambitious —if you could only think of Bob a little,—the poor chap.

MARY. There now, father, please don't talk of Bob. It hurts my pride. I just can't think of it. But here I am thinking of myself only, and not of you. Aren't you about ready for your afterdinner nap? Don't you want to sit in the armchair awhile? [*She begins to lead him to the chair.*]

FOSTER. Really Mary, I'm not sleepy at all.

Not the least bit. Well, have your way my child.

[*He sits down protesting. Mary kisses his forehead, runs to rear of stage, goes to window, arranges curtains, and by this time* FOSTER *is sound asleep. Mary picks up the manuscripts slowly, lays them on the piano, finally places her hands on the keys, as if to play, and then, disconsolate, buries her head in her hands, and sits there silent.*]

Enter BOB.

[*He looks around, sees* FOSTER *and* MARY *apparently asleep. Laughs, in pantomine, and then turns around and knocks gently on the wall.* MARY *looks up as* BOB *runs over to the piano.*]

MARY. Please Bob,—please go home, you're the last person in the world I want to see. Do please go home.

BOB. Gee, you're hospitable.

MARY. Don't joke, Bob, I mean it.

BOB. Honestly, can't I stay? Not even if I have some great news to tell you?

MARY. [*Sadly*] I'm not interested in any news.

BOB. But this news—why [*at a loss*] oh, I know. It's your compositions,—they've been rejected.

MARY. You're quite right. Everybody seems to know but I. You and Miss Kitman and—

BOB. That's not fair, Mary—I didn't mean that.

MARY. Of course you didn't. It's just my foolish mood. Please forgive me for being unkind.

BOB. Forgive you—why, Mary, [*she makes a protesting gesture as he rushes toward her*] I've just got to say it—for the hundredth time—

MARY. Bob don't—

BOB. Won't you please marry me?

MARY. No, I cannot—

BOB. But you said you might be able to love—

MARY. Bob you cannot marry a failure. It would ruin your life, and only make me unhappy. Don't you understand? Why I can see how it all would be. You would go on in the same dear way, trying to persuade me and yourself that I'm a real composer who has done worthy things and proved my right to live. But all the time your mind would be saying "She's a failure, she's a failure, poor thing." And before long—oh, I hate to think of it—your love would turn to pity and I couldn't stand that, I couldn't.

BOB. But you're not a failure, at least you

have not had a chance to prove even that. It's just been lack of influence—pull—. You can't do even great things nowadays without a pull.

MARY. I just can't make myself believe that. Jennie Kitman says—

BOB. Damn Jennie Kitman and her whole crowd. She's the one that's taken all the confidence out of you. She's the one, I tell you.

MARY. But she knows. For years she has represented the best artistic influence in the city. What would the town be if it were not for Jennie Kitman, Carrie Budd and a few others? She's "up" in everything, and if she says I don't know how to write music, and the publishers show the same attitude, well—she must be right.

BOB. Fiddlesticks! In the first place, she hasn't any soul for music, and so she's not capable of judging it. Then she's jealous of you—

MARY. Of me?

BOB. Most certainly. That's not surprising. You might just happen to cast her off her throne. Oh I know these intellectual fourflushers and conventional highbrows. Personal aggrandizement at the expense of eternal art. They haven't an honest idea in their souls—and I tell you right here I know more about art than Jennie Kitman, Carrie Budd, Rose Weber, and the whole bunch put together.

MARY. You!

BOB. Yes, I; and I've arranged to prove it. Come here [*in his intensity, he drags Mary half across the stage*] I'll explain. [*He takes out his watch*] The world renowned pianist, Buckner Packington, will be here within half an hour.

MARY. [*Aghast*] Here!

BOB. Right in this room. He's coming here. The great pianist himself, and not his understudy. And I'm bringing him here. Do you realize the significance of this?

MARY. Realize. I can't realize anything. What pray, are you talking about?

BOB. You see his real name's not Buckner Packington, but Packington Schmitt.

MARY. Not the wonderful Schmitt whom you told me so much about—the one who went to college with you?

BOB. Exactly. He calls me "Bobby" and I call him "Packie"—old nicknames. We were in the same class, the same fraternity and everything else the same.

MARY. [*Not heeding him*] And now he is the great artist Packington. Oh, I envy you, for even knowing him.

BOB. You'll know him too, in less than twenty minutes, for he is coming here.

MARY. Why?

BOB. Simply to help a friend out. He's going to help me prove that I know something about musical compositions,—yours in particular. He's going to look them over.

MARY. Oh, I'm afraid.

BOB. Don't, little girl, don't be afraid. Be brave and believe in what you've done. He's human, sympathetic and kind, like all really great artists. It's only the lesser lights that have to impress their importance on a timid world. Now, when Packington comes you'll find him charming. Why he likes to see other people's ability. He's open to argument and opinions and—gee—I've got a plan—hurrah! [*He jumps around*] I've got a plan!

MARY. For mercy's sake, Bob, what is it?

BOB. We kill two birds with one stone. We'll have him pass on the merits of your music and your friends at the same time. Miss Jennie K. —and the rest.

MARY. You're not going to make him meet them too?

BOB. You've guessed it. We'll invite them over here to listen to him play and then—

MARY. How fine! But will he consent?

BOB. Indeed he will. Why he calls me "Bobby" I say, and I call him "Packie".

MARY. [*Not heeding him*] How grand it will sound. I'll be so proud. Miss Jennie Kitman, I would like to have you come over for an informal recital to be given by my friend, Packington, the pianist.

BOB. Not so fast, my young lady. You'll introduce him as Schmitt, and we'll just see if your highbrow friends can discover this genius for themselves.

MARY. That wont be fair.

BOB. Yes it will. Furthermore, its more of a tribute to their critical powers,—they're all so strong on your delinquencies.

MARY. But, Bob—

BOB. Now don't argue, little lady.

[*Mr. Foster snores violently.*]

MARY. Father! What shall we do with him? I hate to disturb his nap. [*Bob rushes up and puts a screen in front of him.*]

BOB. Screen him off. He'll never hear a thing.

MARY. No he won't, the dear. He sleeps so soundly. And when he gets up he'll say he hasn't slept a wink.

BOB. [*Rushes toward her and tries to embrace her, saying*] Do you think you can ever be persuaded, my dear, to know how much all this means to me? There—

[*The Bell rings.*]

BOB. Packington!

MARY. The great pianist. [*She hastily arranges her hair.*]

[*Enter Pack. He rushes up to Bob and says "Bobbie".*]

BOB. Packie! [*They shake*] [*Mary stands tremulous and waiting.*]

BOB. [*Presenting her*] Miss Foster. You've heard me mention her.

PACK. In every letter. So this is the little composer.

BOB. [*Gesticulating, with finger on lips.*] Sh!

MARY. I'm so proud to meet you and I'll try not to be afraid of you. Bob's been coaching me how to act.

PACK. [*Laughs heartily*] Well, I declare! Well, I declare! It's a pleasure to meet any one whom Bob thinks so much of. As for the music, I can scarcely wait to see it. I feel as though I were about to—

MARY. Oh, please don't Mr. Packington.

BOB. Say—ah—why—we've changed the plan somewhat, Packie, if you don't mind and—

MARY. Oh, but I'm sure he will, that is, I fear he might—

PACK. Don't worry about me—if it's something to give you people pleasure, I'm game!

MARY. [*Somewhat shocked*] Game!

BOB. [*In triumph*] There. Didn't I tell you? Isn't he just a peach? Now you go out and call up Miss Jennie and the rest of that bunch, while I explain matters to Packie.

PACK. Everything's all right then? Good! Good! Now I must tell you my plans. I've only one condition to make, that I may go as soon as I've run through the music, as I must be back in the city. The usual engagements with managers. You understand?

BOB. Very well. Good. [*to Mary*] I'll take him up stairs to brush up; so he'll be at his best in honor of Miss Jennie. [*He leads Pack. up stairs, talking all the while*] It's in honor of these intellectual fourflushers. You're to play for them you see and we hit on a plan whereby, etc. [*Meanwhile Mary has been watching them, filled with wonder. She glides around the room, humming softly. Then she goes to the telephone.*]

MARY. Oakland 17 double 5. Oakland 17 double 5. [*after a moment*] Busy? Call me please, central. [*She goes to the piano, strikes several chords and then leaves piano. Goes to manuscripts, sorts them quickly, and arranges*

them on piano. Then telephones again.] Oakland, 17 double 5—hello. Miss Jennie Kitman. This is Mary at the 'phone. I want you to come over at once, for a little musical. You can't? Why? Omar Khyayam and mysticism in Holland—oh —But can't you study that some other night? This is so important, please come.—Yes, I want your opinion,—your critical opinion. Oh, you think you can, I'm so glad. You see, one of my friends, Mr. Schmitt, a pianist, has just come down from Chicago. I'm so anxious to have you hear him play, for I want your critical opinion of him—Yes, yours—in particular. Oh how good of you. Come just as you are, and right away—in your car. It's informal, no one besides you, Carrie Budd, Rose Weber, May, and a few others. Good-bye and hurry. [*She takes up the telephone book, looks for a number, and then rings again.*] 1915, please. Yes, central. Please call Miss Budd to the 'phone. Either one. Hello. Yes, fine. Why, I want you and your sister to come over this evening for a little informal musical by Schmitt, a friend of mine who has just come down from Chicago. You can't? Oh, I wish you could. Jennie's coming. Yes, Jennie Kitman. Oh, you'll come? All right. Don't dress up. Oh, don't mention it. Glad to have you. [*She is*

about to hang up the receiver, but instead speaks] What's that? Oh, Miss Weber's there? Will you call her to the 'phone? Yes, do. [*After a moment*] Hello. I was just going to call you up. I want you too. Certainly, and if it isn't too much trouble, will you please pick up Agnes Baker? Tell her I'm giving an informal recital for one of my friends, Mr. Schmitt, a pianist and I want all you people to hear him. Just an unexpected visit. Yes, explain that I was too rushed to call her up. Thanks. Good-bye. [*She leaves the telephone and starts to arrange the chairs and screen.*]

BOB. [*Running down stairs*] Have you called up Jennie?

MARY. Yes, and the others too.

BOB. Are they coming?

MARY. At once. They'll be here any moment.

BOB. Well, let's arrange the chairs in concert hall fashion. We'll just seat Jennie here; so she can see to advantage. Seeing is believing, you know. No, that chair wont be comfortable. Take this one. Here and—[*The automobile horn is heard and bell rings a second later.*]

[*Enter Jennie and Miss Baker. Bob returns up stage. All talking at once.*]

JENNIE. [*To* MARY.] Yes dear, we managed to get here. Such a rush. I hated to leave my

books, for to tell you the truth, my dear, I haven't a great deal of confidence in your musical opinion.

MARY. [*Meekly*] Yes, I know, Miss Jennie.

JENNIE. [*Rather hastily*] Tell me, ah, did this pianist of yours bring along any press notices? If he did, I should like very much to see them.

MARY. No. He came unexpectedly as I said, and—

JENNIE. Oh, it's just as well. Merely a formality anyway, you know, merely a formality. [*They talk and motion toward the piano, pictures and books*] [*Calling* BOB, *who has crept over to the window seat and sat down*] Say Bob, [*taking him aside*] Can you tell me who this pianist is socially?

BOB. Who was Beethoven socially?

JENNIE. Well, I declare, I've forgotten. I must look that up in my musical encyclopedia. Miss Baker, can you tell me who the—

[*The door bell rings again, and the Misses Budd and Miss Weber enter. They exchange greetings and talk.*]

JENNIE. [*At length*] Is he here yet Mary, or is he going to keep me waiting. I despise being made to wait you know.

MARY. Oh, he'll be here in just a moment. [*She stops as she sees Packington coming down the steps.*] There he is now.

ALL. The pianist. Do you see him? There he is.

[PACK. *Descends, and* BOB *and* MARY *present him to the guests.*]

MISS BAKER. Charmed, I'm sure.

MISS BUDD. How do you do. Do you happen to know Mr. Paderewski? He's a great friend of my cousin's.

MISS EMILY. [*Breaking in*] I'm looking forward to hearing you play. If I may, later, I'm going to ask you to play one of my favorite selections.

MISS JENNIE. How do you do, Mr. Schmitt.

MISS WEBER. [*Gushingly shakes hands with* PACK. *who then walks over to* MARY *and talks aside to her.*]

MISS JENNIE. [*To* MISS WEBER] How ordinary he looks doesn't he?

MISS WEBER. Yes indeed, quite bourgeois. [*they talk.*]

PACK. [*To* MARY] Now, I'm not going to keep you in suspense long, my little composer. If the work seems to me to have no merit, I shan't play but a page or two, but if it is promising and worth while, I'll play it to the last note.

MARY. Thanks, so much. [*She takes his hand a moment.*]

MISS BAKER. [*To* MISS WEBER] Did you see that? She held his hand. I declare it's not the proper thing at all. She thinks that's Bohemian, but I think it's scandalous. Two strange men, a lot of helpless women and no chaperone. Where's her father, I wonder; that's what I'd like to know. He ought to look after such takings on. [*They all talk.*]

PACK. Now don't worry about me, nor the audience. I'll forget they're here. If I once get interested cannon balls wont disturb me. [*He sits down to the piano and begins to arrange the music.*]

BOB. [*To* MISS JENNIE] Where will you sit, here or here?

JENNIE. Why, if you don't mind, I'll take this chair, and if you please, turn the piano this way somewhat; so I can watch his hands. You know, [*to the others*] I place great emphasis on the position of the hands. [MARY *aghast. The guests take chairs.* PACK. *and* BOB *move the piano a little.* PACK. *sits down again.*] Beedowsky and Chacon in relative manual dexterity excel in the staccato.

MISS WEBER. [*Grandly*] So I've noticed. [*all murmur until* PACK. *begins to play which he*

does beautifully. For about three minutes all is silent, then to MARY'S *consternation and* BOB'S *amusement, everyone begins to talk, fan noisily and move her chair, regardless of the music.*]

JENNIE. Say, MISS AGNES, speaking of *real* music, have you heard the Symphony Orchestra this season?

MISS WEBER. [*Drawing up her chair to* JENNIE, *placing the back slightly toward the piano*] No, I haven't. I've been devoting all my time to symbolism and Maeterlinck. I find them so beautiful, especially "Joyzelle". Have you found that there is a wealth of—

MISS BAKER. [*Drawing up her chair*] Pardon me, ladies, but I consider the absence of a chaperone a personal affront, don't you?

JENNIE. Well, why don't you say something?

MISS BAKER. Why, oh—ah—I hate to [*hastily*] I was going to ask you, JENNIE. Did you hear Mildred Banky's concert last Wednesday? Wasn't it wonderful?

JENNIE. It may have been that, but it made me most unhappy. All I could think of was that low cut gown she wore. Oh! It was low. [*all talk at once for a while and draw up their chairs.*]

MISS WEBER. What's that composition he's playing, Jennie?

JENNIE. [*At a loss*] Why, it's either Wagner or Mozart. Really I'm lost without a program. BOB! [*He rushes up, quietly*] Find out for me whether that's a Mozart or Wagner number. [BOB *rushes across to* MARY *and whispers.*]

BOB. She wants to know whether he's playing Wagner or Mozart. [MARY *motions him sternly away, and resumes her air of rapt attention.*]

[JENNIE *resumes critical, listening air for a few minutes. The piano stops a second, and* JENNIE *holds up her hands to give signal for applause. All applaud, but piano starts again and there is a temporary confusion. Mr. Foster snores loudly, and* JENNIE *says with contempt.*]

JENNIE. What sonority.

MISS WEBER. [*draws up close to* MISS JENNIE *and says confidentially.*] JENNIE, what do you think of the pianist?

JENNIE. Confidentially, not much. No technique, no style, no verve, no—ah nothing. Oh—I'm so tired of hearing poor and indifferent pianists. If I could only arrange to hear the great Packington. The papers are full of praise for him. Why, I'd walk ten miles to hear Packington—[*at this point* PACK. *plays a brilliant*

melodious run and JENNIE *shudderingly says*] Wasn't that awful? Oh, I flatter myself [*she continues while the others in pantomime, pass on her confidential opinions*] I know what good music is. And I can tell in a moment whether music is good or bad. I loathe ordinary dance music. Well—it's all right for drawing a circus crowd, but otherwise, ugh—it positively makes me ill. Now, I'll tell you the kind of music I adore. Symphonies and overtures. All kinds of technique, but an entire absence of melody. You see, I don't hesitate to tell you what I think. I'm independent, not like some people I know. They go to the concert in the evening and you ask them how they like it, but you can't get a word out of them. No indeed; not yet. They wait till the criticism comes out in the morning paper, and then they talk, oh yes, then they talk. But I'm independent and as for praise—well, if there must be any, I contrive to make it negative in character.

ALL. Yes, yes, of course. [*they talk.*]

MISS WEBER. MISS BAKER, if you feel that way about the chaperone—

MISS BUDD. Yes, if you feel that way, why don't you tell her so? I'm sure it's your place to do so, and at once. I'm sure it's a disgrace—no sign of a chaperone.

MISS LYDIA BUDD. Yes—get up and tell her at once that you think her father ought to know.

MISS *BAKER.* [*Rising nervously and edging back toward screen*] Ah, I don't know if I ought to. You see her father is always alert and wide awake and for this reason, I don't think he ought to be exposed—[*she knocks over the screen, exposing Mr. Foster still asleep. General confusion in the midst of which* MISS BAKER *says*—] Let's go home. [*All acquiesce,* MISS KITMAN *leading*] Yes, let's go home. Let's go home. [*Meanwhile Packington closes piano and shakes hands with* MARY *and* BOB *steps forward and says*]

BOB. That's all right. Don't mind the screen. I trust you ladies will forgive me for not telling you the real identity of our guest, but I wish to introduce him to you now, under his real name. Ladies meet Mr. Buckner Packington—

ALL. Packington! [*They all look at Jennie.*]

JENNIE. [*After a moment*] Didn't I tell you? *I* knew it all the time.

ALL. Why, MISS KITMAN.

JENNIE. [*Savagely*] Well, what are you waiting for? I thought we were going home. [*They all rush out regardless of eitquette or anything else, while* BOB *laughs.*]

PACK. Well, young people, now I must be going, and the music—ah, my little girl, [*he walks over to her*] it's worthy and beautiful. I am proud of you.—I'll take it along with me and see what I can do about it. Ah, it is late, I must go. Goodbye, young people.

BOB. Goodbye, and thanks—Packie—

MARY. [*Speechless, takes both his hands in her own for a moment.*]

PACK. [*As he goes*] Goodbye.

MARY. Ah—I'm so happy, so very happy.

BOB. It is I who must be unhappy now, for I never would dare ask a great composer to marry me.

MARY. Ah, yes, but you discovered me—and well [*laughing*] at least you're near great.

BOB. Let's tell father. [*He takes* MARY *over to* MR. FOSTER, *whom he taps on the shoulder.*]

FOSTER. [*Rising*] No, I never slept a wink—I was just resting.

BOB. Give us your blessing, father.

FOSTER. Well [*astonished*] why, ah, certainly—bless you, my children, bless you. [*They walk up stage in each other's arms.*]

FOSTER. [*Scratching his head*] I wonder if I *could* have been sleeping, after all

Curtain

MRS. BOMPTON'S DINNER PARTY

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Mrs. Bompton

Barbara, *her daughter*

George

Camille

Scotch Mag

Mr. and Mrs. Wayne-Brown

Mr. Lemuel Carter

Miss Mae DeFreese

Mr. and Mrs. Von Kirtland

Miss Vera Slogan

Hon. and Mrs. Pudget

Dr. and Mrs. Folkingham

MRS. BOMPTON'S DINNER PARTY.

Scene: *Dining room of Mrs. Bompton's handsome residence. Table set to accommodate sixteen guests. The room, though not a large one, seems spacious and important. There are four doors, one at the rear and two at the right, leading to other rooms. The general entrance is in a farther corner at the left. A large mirror hangs on the rear wall. At the right, very near to the door, stands a high pedestal holding a large vase filled with roses.*

[*Curtain rises disclosing Barbara at mirror arranging her necklace. She takes it off and puts it on several times, striving to secure the desired effect. The voice of Mrs. Bompton is heard without.*]

MRS. BOMPTON. Barbara! Barbara! [*enter* MRS. BOMPTON] Barbara!

BARBARA. Yes, Mother.

MRS. BOMPTON. What are you doing?

BARBARA. Fixing my necklace, a perfectly natural thing to be—

MRS. BOMPTON. Well, you'd better attend to something serious for we are in the deepest trouble and distress.

BARBARA. Heavens, mother! What has happened? Somebody sick, dead, money, accident—

MRS. BOMPTON. Worse than that [*Mournfully*] Worse than that.

BARBARA. Worse!

MRS. BOMPTON. Yes. [*After a pause*] The butler and the maid have left, both of them and not fifteen minutes ago.

BARBARA. [*A trifle annoyed*] Oh! Is that all?

MRS. BOMPTON. You ungrateful child. Is that all? Isn't that enough? Here I'm giving an elaborate dinner party. The food's all cooked, the people all invited and the illustrious SCOTCH MAG, the guest of honor, and here the butler and the maid leave at the same time. What shall I do? They will be coming in any moment and there won't be a soul here to receive them and no one to give them a bite to eat. I tell you I'll never hire a Socialist again.

BARBARA. Wish you wouldn't mother, though it will doubtless be somebody just as bad. When you belonged to the Psychic Uplift movement, we had Psychic Uplifters all over the house, when you were addicted to modern Transcen-

dentalism we were deluged with Transcendentalists. Now it's Socialism and Socialists, and as a result the house is forever topsy turvy.

MRS. BOMPTON. That's right. Reproach your own natural mother.

BARBARA. I'm not reproaching you dear. I'm—

MRS. BOMPTON. Yes, you are. Oh dear, everything goes wrong. Now, I had the drawing room and hall redecorated especially for this affair, and here at the last moment the decorators don't finish, and then what do I do? Use this room for hall, drawing room, dining room and what not? The responsibility always falls on me.

BARBARA. That's not my fault, mother.

MRS. BOMPTON. No, of course not. But won't you help me? The guests are coming any minute.

BARBARA. I will help you mother. I'm very sorry you are in a predicament. I'll do anything. Let's call up the employment agency at once. Maybe we can get someone there.

MRS. BOMPTON. I've called up already and they promised to send up a woman on the next car. She ought to be here now—this very minute. Oh, maybe she won't come at all. Wouldn't

it be dreadful? [*She paces up and down*] What shall I do? What shall I do?

BARBARA. First, mother, I'd give up Socialism and the rest of the isms. Your peace of mind would be—

MRS. BOMPTON. Give up nothing! Give up Socialism,—my life—my hope, the salvation of the race and boon to humanity? How can you, Barbara, how can you? On this day too, when I am to entertain the greatest of all Socialists, SCOTCH MAG, that acme of culture, the liberator, —but how can I entertain when I haven't a maid or a—

[*A bell rings.* MRS. BOMPTON *and* BARBARA *make signs of alarm.*]

MRS. BOMPTON. There she is now, or another guest, or all the guests or perhaps—

[*Enter Camile.*]

CAMILE. [*As* MRS. BOMPTON *and* BARBARA *rush toward her*] Don't trouble please. The door was open and I just walked in without any ceremony.

MRS. BOMPTON. [*Making great display of welcome to* BARBARA. *In awed tones*] It must be SCOTCH MAG, herself.

[CAMILLE *meanwhile impudently looks around, "sizes things up," examines the*

bric-a-brac, and regards the vase and pedestal from various points of view.]

CAMILLE. What a beautiful place this is, and what beautiful expensive things. It makes me sad. I could almost weep over it. [*She wipes her eyes*] Oh, I know I shall like it here.

BARBARA. Like it?

MRS. BOMPTON. We Socialists always like to be together. Isn't socialism a wonderful thing?

CAMILLE. Yes, I should say. I love society. I'm very sociable and I'm so popular. Why, last night at the bartenders' ball I—simply created—

MRS. BOMPTON. Bartenders' ball! Sociable. Society. What can this mean? [*After a moment*] Why, you're not SCOTCH MAG.

CAMILLE. Who is she? Another applicant?

MRS. BOMPTON. Applicant? [*coming to*] Oh, you came from the employment agency.

CAMILLE. [*Phlegmatically*] Yes.

MRS. BOMPTON. You're the new domestic?

CAMILLE. Yes, I'm the new servant, and if you please, [*smiling sweetly*] I'd like to be called "Camille",—it's such a pretty name. It always makes me weep.

MRS. BOMPTON. Very well. [*haughtily*] I understand. Now, it will be your duty to attend to everything unless the new butler comes.

CAMILLE. Yes ma'am.

MRS. BOMPTON. As the other rooms are being redectorated, you'll have to bring the guests right in here. They can put their wraps in that room.

CAMILLE. Yes ma'am.

MRS. BOMPTON. Be careful and mannerly. [*to* BARBARA] Please show CAMILLE to her room. [*She walks around the room and ostentatiously adjusts the articles* CAMILLE *has displaced.*]

CAMILLE. [*Rushing over to* BARBARA] Yes, do show me my room, please. I like you already. Are you her daughter? [BARBARA *nods*] Do tell. [*as they walk out*] I'd never have thought it, so little resemblance. But tell me, I'd love to know, have you a "steady"? You know I think —[*exeunt*].

[MRS. BOMPTON *continues busying herself around the room when George enters, steals up behind her and places his hands over her eyes.*]

GEORGE. Three guesses.

MRS. BOMPTON. It's that old nuisance of a GEORGE and he thinks I am BARBARA.

GEORGE. No, I don't, really. I think that you are the best—

MRS. BOMPTON. See here, George. I have absolutely no time for your foolishness. I must

get to work and you must too. [*She sits down comfortably*] Now, first set every one of those chairs in proper order. Pull down the shades, —see that they are even,—and arrange the curtains. Now, straighten the rug and that other rug, and the picture too, while you're at it. Then see if the table is complete, and be careful not to upset the vases while you're doing it.

GEORGE. But why, pray, must I be butler?

MRS. BOMPTON. Simply because the regular one is gone and the maid also.

GEORGE. Whoops! Again! But I thought socialists liked to work together.

MRS. BOMPTON. See here, young fellow, you have lots to learn yet about Socialism. As I've told you so often, it's the mecca of the masses, the altar of hope, the glorious goal to which—

GEORGE. [*Sighting* BARBARA *entering*] Excuse me a moment. [*Rushes over to* BARBARA.]

BARBARA. Hello there George. Are you the first dinner guest?

GEORGE. No, madam, I'm merely the butler, —merely the butler. [*They hold each other's hands for several moments and gaze soulfully into each other's eyes.*] How have you been?

BARBARA. How have *you* been?

GEORGE. Very well, thank you, very well and you?

BARBARA. Very well, indeed. [*They continue to hold hands and to look at each other.*]

MRS. BOMPTON. [*Sharply*] Young people. [*They drop each other's hands, with a start*] No nonsense, I am giving an exclusive dinner party, and I am without help, and I simply demand your assistance.

GEORGE. Oh let's talk instead. What's a dinner amount to anyway?

MRS. BOMPTON. But this isn't a regular dinner party, it's an unique function for a celebrity.

GEORGE. A what? Say, BARBARA, tell me what it's all about. Why is this dinner party different from all other proverbial dinner parties?

BARBARA. Shame on you. You've forgotten already. SCOTCH MAG is to be the guest of honor.

MRS. BOMPTON. [*Waxing eloquent*] Indeed yes! SCOTCH MAG, the queen of modern socialists, the leader of all women for all times, the great apostle of light, and above all, the most refined lady socialist of the period.

GEORGE. But my dear MRS. BOMPTON, how do you know all this? Are you sure of it?

MRS. BOMPTON. How do I know? [*puzzled for a moment*] Yes [*to herself*] how *do* I know? [*then aloud*] Of course I know. Does not every

one who knows anything about Socialism know that SCOTCH MAG is a wonder, a person—

GEORGE. Pardon me, MRS. BOMPTON, but do you think it quite safe to bring these strangers into your house, in such a promiscuous way, when you don't even know—

MRS. BOMPTON. Know fiddlesticks! Every one who has read any thing at all knows that SCOTCH MAG,—I tell you I'm tired of your insinuations. You're continually casting slurs on my socialists and the cause, and what not. Ah—ah—oh [*stamps her foot*] I don't know what to say to you. Here I, SCOTCH MAG, and the whole thinking world have adopted Socialism, and you, you, you, there you stand. I tell you, never in the whole world will you be my son-in-law. [*exit in a great passion.*]

GEORGE. [*Throwing out his hands*] Now what do you think of that?

BARBARA. She's right in all she says. I quite agree with her.

GEORGE. You! What's this? Have you turned Socialist also?

BARBARA. No. But I sympathize with mother. You always are creating doubt and suspicion around here and that's the end of it. If you think there is something wrong with mother's guest, why don't you prove it instead of—

GEORGE. But BARBARA, I meant it for your good and I thought—

BARBARA. Of course, I confess, I'm kind of afraid of all these strange celebrities myself, and that's just why it's wrong of you to come around and frighten me still more—

GEORGE. I'm sorry—

BARBARA. That's it. I expected to hear you say that. And what good does that do? Why don't you act as other men do? But not you, you're too willing to rest on your laurels.

GEORGE. Barbara!

BARBARA. Well,—I didn't mean to hurt your feelings, but you know you are not so *very* strenuous.

GEORGE. [*Crestfallen*] When we used to talk about these things you did not seem to think this way. I had hoped that I could be considered reasonably successful, and that I could offer you enough to make you happy.

BARBARA. [*Piqued*] It's not a question of me.

GEORGE. Oh, yes, it is.

BARBARA. It isn't. And anyway how are you ever going to get me when you are continually antagonizing mother? Indeed, it looks as though you were taking that way of getting rid of me entirely.

GEORGE. [*Diregarding her*] Of course I'm not exactly like other men. I've been fairly content, I admit, to leave well enough alone. I cannot even see the value of rows of idle coffers filled with gold. I think money was meant to be used, not treasured. What I have I've made honestly through hard work and some sacrifice. I thought it was enough to make us both happy. I am healthy, strong and active. You are the same. Of course, if you prefer a broken down plutocrat and a stately mansion and—

BARBARA. [*Starts to cry*] You're horrid GEORGE,—just horrid. You always will quarrel. I'm sure I can't help what mother does. Why, I haven't the least idea where she met SCOTCH MAG. You know I look hideous when I cry. It is just—[exit weeping.]

[GEORGE *then begins to arrange the room.* —*Enter* CAMILLE.]

CAMILLE. [*To* GEORGE] How'do. I suppose you are the new butler.

GEORGE. There! That's the trouble with these full dress suits. You can't tell a guest from a butler.

CAMILLE. You are a nice looking butler and I like you very much.

GEORGE. [GEORGE *makes signs of distress and then says, bowing*] Thanks.

CAMILLE. [*Enthusiastically*] Say do you know you remind me—

GEORGE. That reminds me.

CAMILLE. Yes, you remind me of a friend of mine. Professor John De Breezo. He is a steeple climber. They call him Jack. He leads such a sad life. I could weep when I think of it. You know we used to go together, but we fell out. That's just my luck. I always fall out. You see it was this way. He took me to the circus when it was here, and that's when we quarreled. He wanted me to go right straight in to the big show and I insisted on going to the side show first. I simply dote on the side show, and I never feel that I've really gone to the circus unless I attend it. But any way it was the day of the circus, you see that—

[*The bell rings.* CAMILLE *rushes across stage and makes up at the mirror. Exit* GEORGE, *and then leisurely ushers in* MR. AND MRS. WAYNE-BROWN.]

CAMILLE. [*To* MR. AND MRS. WAYNE-BROWN, *animatedly*] Yes, as I was sayin', I went to the ten cent vaudeville last night and it was great, —five good acts besides the moving picture and the illustrated song which was very sad and made me weep. There always is something or—[*exit*]

[*Bell rings and* CAMILLE *re-enters at once, to usher in* MR. AND MRS. VON KIRTLAND *and* MISS VERA SLOGAN. *Meanwhile* MRS. BOMPTON *re-enters and forms receiving line with* BARBARA. *Re-enter* GEORGE.]

CAMILLE. [*To new arrivals*] It was really a beautiful story about a divorced duchess and her platonic friend, and their troubles. I wept over parts of it and you really couldn't blame—

[*Bell rings and* CAMILLE *ushers in* DR. AND MRS. FOLKINGHAM.]

CAMILLE. Yes really and honestly. The truth about the matter is this. I simply dote on onions. They're so healthy. Yet every time I prepare them they make me weep. I guess it's —[*She collides with a vase which breaks to pieces.—Exit, weeping loudly.*]

[*Temporary panic mingled with cries from* MRS. BOMPTON *of "servant, stupidity, swell dinner party"; soothing comments from* BARBARA *and the constant ringing of the bell.* GEORGE *in his capacity of butler sweeps up the remains of the vase.* CAMILLE *wiping her eyes, finally answers bell, ushering in* MISS MAE DEFREESE, HON. AND MRS. PUDGET *and* MR. LEMUEL CARTER. MR. PUDGET *wears medals.*]

[*In the midst of the general excitement of receiving,* GEORGE *tries to be attentive to* BARBARA. *She receives him coldly and he talks to* MISS DEFREESE *to the annoyance of* BARBARA *and* MR. CARTER. *Finally* MRS. BOMPTON'S *voice is heard above the rest.*]

MRS. BOMPTON. Yes, MISS SLOGAN, SCOTCH MAG is certainly a celebrity and you certainly are privileged to have the opportunity of meeting her. She has accomplished untold values for the equality of man, of which, as you know, I am a strong advocate. She is so democratic, so simple and yet so refined and cultured. Why, I assure you, in a personal typewritten letter to me, she herself mentions all these rare qualities. Naturally I feel confident she must possess them. But why doesn't she come? She's past due now. Everything will get cold and won't be fit to eat, and then the dinner will be spoiled and then—

BARBARA. [*Soothingly*] Don't worry mother. She'll come. Just have patience. [*The bell rings*] There she is now.

[*Enter* SCOTCH MAG *in decidedly masculine fashion, followed by* CAMILLE *who is a little over-awed and mystified at the appearance of the last arrival.*]

MRS. BOMPTON. [*Walking up to her with great dignity*] SCOTCH MAG, the famous socialist, I believe.

SCOTCH MAG. Glad to see you, my dear MRS. BOMPTON. [*She embraces her violently.*]

MRS. BOMPTON. [*Quite elated*] Now, let me introduce you to the other guests. This lady is MRS. WAYNE-

MAG. Oh, don't trouble about their names. We are all sisters and brothers without degree or title. I shall not hesitate at throwing aside ceremony and will shake the hand of every brother, and embrace every sister present.

[*She starts in to shake hands hastily with each man, and to embrace violently every woman in turn, beginning with* BARBARA. *While embracing* MRS. VON KIRTLAND, *the latter cries out.*]

MRS. VON KIRTLAND. Oh, my neck! You're squeezing my necklace.

MAG. Pardon me, I am so enthusiastic. [*She stoops and picks up* MRS. VON KIRTLAND'S *necklace which has fallen to the floor.*] Your necklace. [*Aside, to no one in particular*] Women will wear these heathen ornaments. [*Then she shakes hands hastily with the remaining men. George waits a moment and looks at her slowly before offering his hand.* CAMILLE *glowers.*]

MRS. BOMPTON. Now, that you have all had the honor and the privilege of meeting SCOTCH MAG let us repair to the dinner table.

MAG. If you will pardon me, I will first excuse myself and take a moment to shampoo my hair. You know I always take a dry shampoo before dinner. [*to* CAMILLE] Come, my pretty miss, show me the way. [CAMILLE *goes defiantly amidst a great silence. All the guests stand in a circle and look questioningly at* MRS. BOMPTON.]

ALL. Shampoo her hair!

MRS. BOMPTON. [*Defiantly*] It's—it's a socialist custom,—that is, I mean, we don't believe in being formal,—besides, celebrities are always different from other people. But let's talk about the weather.

[*Everyone talks.*]

MRS. FOLK. [*To* MRS. WAYNE-BROWN] Oh, my dear MRS. WAYNE-BROWN, did you go to Mrs. Catskill's reception?

MRS. WAYNE-BROWN. I beg pardon?

MRS. FOLK. Did you go to Mrs. Catskill's reception?

MRS. WAYNE-BROWN. Yes, I regret to say I did. It was the same old thing,—quantity, instead of quality. Quite too stupid to talk about, I'm sure. [*Animatedly to* MISS DEFREESE *who*

approaches.] Oh, MISS DEFREESE, did you go to Mrs. Catskill's reception?

MISS DEFREESE. Yes, indeed! Delightful affair, wasn't it? So novel too. [*They walk to back of stage, leaving* MRS. FOLKINGHAM *standing.*] Thoroughly enjoyable in every respect, MRS. WAYNE-BROWN, as you—

MR. VON KIRTLAND. Just as I tell you, MR. CARTER. Every good archeologist knows that the recent excavations at Mycene and Tiryns have thoroughly established the fact that scientifically as well as logically, the effects of—[*sighting* MRS. VON KIRTLAND. *Aside*] Pay your respects to MRS. WAYNE-BROWN, my dear, pay your respects to MRS. WAYNE-BROWN. [*To* MR. CARTER] Have thoroughly established the scientific hypothesis that the enigma of—

MR. CARTER. Yes, I know, MR. VON KIRTLAND, [*they go to back of stage*] but don't you see that a deficiency of this sort is.

MISS SLOGAN. [*To* MR. PUDGET] Oh, quite true, quite true. I sincerely believe in the high value of literature and its noble standards. Believe me, MR. PUDGET, I glorify in art.

MRS. PUDGET. [*Rushing up*] Oh, MISS SLOGAN, have you read "The Wrist of Frances"? It's perfectly splendid and the very best seller.

MISS SLOGAN. [*Icily*] The what of Frances?

MRS. PUDGET. "The Wrist of Frances." Everyone's reading it you know, and I'm sure that *you*—

MISS SLOGAN. I never read the new books. I read the classics only. At present I am reading Shakespeare's "King Lear" for the first time. I assure you that it is a masterpiece.

MR. PUDGET. I quite agree with you.

MISS SLOGAN. I thank you. As they say so often, "Satan still finds books for idle hands to write." N'est-ce pas?

MR. PUDGET. Verily. Why, just yesterday someone was saying that "Marie Claire" is the—

MR. FOLKINGHAM. [*To* MR. WAYNE-BROWN] I say BROWN, I wish they'd eat, don't you?

MR. WAYNE-BROWN. You bet. I've got a bloomin' appetite. This reminds me of an English dinner party. Give me a good substantial home meal any time.

MR. FOLKINGHAM. [*To* MR. CARTER, *coming up*] Say, CARTER, what about the market? Have stocks gone up again? Tell me. [*The three men walk away talking.*]

MRS. FOLKINGHAM. [*To* MRS. PUDGET] It certainly is shocking. I hate to speak of it. I don't like to gossip, but they say that—

MRS. PUDGET. Yes, and besides they say that—

MRS. FOLKINGHAM. Shocking. [*They walk away.*]

BARBARA. [*Goes quietly over to* GEORGE] GEORGE, my necklace is gone. What shall I do?

GEORGE. Your necklace gone?

BARBARA. Yes, what shall I do?

GEORGE. [*After several moments*] Don't worry, dear. We'll get it back.

BARBARA. It's very valuable, you know.

GEORGE. You're sure you didn't lose it?

BARBARA. Positive. I just put it on a moment before you came in.

GEORGE. Very well. I'll see that you get it back.

BARBARA. You mean—

GEORGE. Wait, and don't worry.

MAG. [*Re-enters. Hair much spread out.*] I feel much better. Let's sit down and eat.

MRS. BOMPTON. Yes, let us sit down now. You'll find your place cards without any difficulty. [*They start taking their places*] SCOTCH MAG at the center, please. Our celebrity must have the place of honor. [*They finish seating themselves.*]

CAMILLE. [*As she sees* GEORGE *sitting down, to no one in particular*] The butler's sitting down too. They might have asked me too. [*Exit and then returns with first course.*]

[*Starts serving the various courses. She lurches about so frightfully that the individual guests seem worried about their safety. Then she reaches far over each guest, brushing their heads as she deposits the dishes. Mag's table manners are atrocious. Over the general conversation, the following remarks are heard.*]

MR. CARTER. Yes, I always read the morning papers.

MISS DEFREESE. Oh, do you? They say they do not exert an ethical influence. Somehow, I—

MRS. WAYNE-BROWN. Caviar? Don't mention it. I can't bear it. Never.

MRS. FOLKINGHAM. [*To* MRS. WAYNE-BROWN] Still after all your trips abroad, I should think that Russian—

GEORGE. [*To* SCOTCH MAG] Tell me, SCOTCH MAG, what do you think of Karl Marx's book?

MAG. Why,—oh—ah—I—It's wonderful, wonderful, and so interesting. [*To her neighbor*] You were saying—

MRS. PUDGET. That's exactly my idea of art, MR. CARTER. I do not favor impression. It is too, oh, what shall I call it? Too, ah—

MRS. BOMPTON. Believe me, MR. VON KIRTLAND, I feel that my mission, and the salvation of—

MR. VON KIRTLAND. I quite agree with you MRS. BOMPTON.

DR. FOLKINGHAM. [*To* MRS. WAYNE-BROWN] I had just reached that ravine, and the night was advancing when—

MISS SLOGAN. Oh, is the Doctor telling his bear story again?

DR. FOLKINGHAM. No, it's my other one.

MR. PUDGET. No, absolutely and positively, I will not consent to be president of any bridge club.

GEORGE. [*To* SCOTCH MAG] I have not heard yet, SCOTCH MAG, if you advocate co-operation.

MAG. I never was great on operations.

MRS. VON KIRTLAND. Is your soup cold?

MR. VON KIRTLAND. Cold as an icicle.

MISS DEFREESE. See, how intellectual the VON KIRTLANDS appear. I wager you're discussing the Hammurabi code.

MR. VON KIRTLAND. Yes, I was just about to say—

MRS. BOMPTON. [*Rising*] Ladies and Gentlemen: I think it is only befitting the dignity of this occasion that we have a toast list. I will take the liberty of acting as toastmistress. [*applause*] Our first number will be by that born leader of all social progress, SCOTCH MAG. [*Applause.*]

MAG. Ladies and Gents. [*Here* CAMILLE *drops a tray, breaks a number of dishes and retires weeping*] I repeat, Ladies and Gents, I am delighted to see you all, especially on this occasion around the festive board. Socialism is the greatest thing in the world. [*Applause led by* MRS. BOMPTON. ... I have done a great deal for socialism and hope to do much more. I do this good work, not for my own gain, but for the benefit of the world at large. [*applause as before*] I would gladly die for the cause. [*applause*] That's all. Thank you one and all.

MRS. BOMPTON. [*Rising*] That was an excellent oration. I'm glad you appreciated and liked it. Now, we'll hear from my daughter. [*applause*]

BARBARA. Must I, mother?

MRS. BOMPTON. Yes, but don't make it too long.

BARBARA. [*Rising*] I thank you ladies and gentlemen for your applause. I only wish I were worthy of it. I hardly know what to say, but the busy life my mother and her distinguished friends lead, make me reflect often on the strenuous character of modern life. We Americans, as you know, are especially strenuous, and I as an American girl inherit the habit. But I regret it, for it is a serious mistake. I believe

that our excess of ambition is harmful, destroys life, health and strength and blights the future welfare of the race. I don't uphold the cause of the sluggard but I think that extremes are always bad. You are great, and I am obscure, but if I can offer you a message, let it be this one: Moderate your ambitions and thereby live happily, healthfully, and beautifully. [*applause*].

MRS. BOMPTON. And now, will Mr. George please say a few words?

GEORGE. Indeed, I shall. I'm just in the mood. I'll speak of love. And what is love anyhow? It is that inexpressible thing which we are all trying to express. Simple enough. The world is full of love. It is beautiful and noble. I love the world. I love everyone in the world. I'm the happiest man alive. I thank all of you. [*applause*]—[*Sits down, but rises again, looking grave.*] Unfortunately, I must add a postscript. We sometimes overlook the material side of this world when we are carried away in our enthusiasms. I do not feel entirely sure if I love everyone here or not, because I don't know everyone well enough, and besides, it is foolish to squander love on everyone. Now, I once had a chum who entertained a person at his own table whom he believed to be a sincere friend, devoted to his interests and welfare. Instead, he

soon learned the contrary. The supposed friend was deliberately [*he looks directly at* SCOTCH MAG] plotting—was deliberately plotting—[MAG *drops the glass she is holding and it shatters on the floor. There is a great pause. Finally* CAMILLE *enters.*]

CAMILLE. Did someone break something?

[*General laughter and conversation follow and the meal is continued.* CAMILLE *serves and while doing so becomes entangled in* MAG'S *hair.* MAG *strives to extricate herself and increases the trouble. A slight tussle follows and confusion. With a last jerk* CAMILLE *frees herself, at the same time pulling off* MAG'S *black wig, disclosing her red hair.*]

MAG. [*Hastily*] Give it to me quickly. Give it to me, I say, and I'll put it on again. Hand it to me. CAMILLE *starts to hand back the wig.*]

GEORGE. A moment, please. I'll take it. [MAG *jumps forth with a shriek, but he is too quick for her. He examines the wig slowly and carefully and at last draws out* BARBARA'S *necklace.*] Here, BARBARA, is your necklace. I take pleasure in returning it to you, for it is a very handsome one. That violent embrace and subsequent shampoo almost deprived you of it permanently.

MRS. BOMPTON. What's this? [*She looks at the wig in* GEORGE'S *hand and the necklace in* BARBARA'S *hand*] I can't believe that she was smart enough to do it. That witch, that thief, impose on me so and at my swell dinner too. SCOTCH MAG indeed! I'll have the police on her. Where is she? Bring her to me. Where is she? Where is she? [*There is a search for her, but she is not found.*]

CAMILLE. [*Finally appearing*] Please mam, I showed her out.

MRS. BOMPTON. Very well. Very well. Very —[*She swoons and all the guests slip away.* BARBARA *fans her.* GEORGE *stops* CAMILLE *in the act of throwing the champagne cooler at her.*]

MRS. BOMPTON. [*Coming to*] Didn't I do that cleverly?

BARBARA. Do what?

MRS. BOMPTON. Why, swoon. I had to get rid of those gaping curious guests somehow. It is a relief to have the place to ourselves. And now I must thank GEORGE. [*Going over to him*] You were right GEORGE. You thought just as I did about the woman. She seemed very suspicious to me from the first. GEORGE, my own son, I'm proud of you. [*She kisses him heartily, unashamed*] You know I don't care about the Socialist business anyway. MR. VON KIRTLAND

at dinner persuaded me to take up Euphoria, the new religion. Euphoria comes from the Greek word meaning sense of well being. It stands for all that is best, noblest, and strongest in mortal and immortal life. My creed is henceforth Euphoria. And now, you'll excuse me please while I discharge CAMILLE. You know it was really she who ruined my dinner party. [*exit.*]

BARBARA. I am at least glad it is Euphoria and not an "ism" this time. Aren't you?

GEORGE. Yes. Euphoria, sense of well being doesn't sound half bad.

BARBARA. On the contrary, it sounds very good.

GEORGE. I'm beginning to experience it already, aren't you?

BARBARA. Well, yes,—somewhat.

GEORGE. BARBARA, do you love me? [*He goes to her and starts to embrace her.*]

BARBARA. Well, GEORGE, indeed I must— [CAMILLE *enters weeping. They do not hear her until she stops midway and says aloud.*]

CAMILLE. Land sakes! I never saw such a butler in all my professional experience. [*exit weeping.*]

[GEORGE *and* BARBARA *embrace.*]

THERE'S ALWAYS A REASON

CASTE

Mrs. Edith Williams Hallam

Ruth

Fanchon

Kate

Jane

Grace

Belle

Ida

Helen

Susan

THERE'S ALWAYS A REASON.

Scene Living Room of the HALLAM *residence.*
Time The present.

[*Curtain rises disclosing Edith* (R) *pouring tea at tea-table.* RUTH *sitting down* (L) *and* FANCHON *behind her chair.*

RUTH. Tell me all about it again, EDITH. I haven't understood one single word.

FANCHION. You stupid. Not a single word? Can't you really understand what EDITH has been telling us?

RUTH. No, I can't. Can you?

FANCHION. [*Laughing*] No. I can't either. It's all a great big mystery. [*To* EDITH] Wont you explain again?

RUTH. Yes! Please start over again, from the very first.

EDITH. [*Passes tea and* FANCHION *sits down*] There! I was afraid it would be difficult. Yet it's really very simple. The whole matter concerns just—

RUTH. Why do you stop dear?

EDITH. Well—you know, after all, it is rather hard to explain.

RUTH. Why?

EDITH. Well because—because you are both unmarried, that is, you are both single and—

FANCHION. Oh don't let that trouble you dear.

RUTH. And besides you said it was for the good of the unmarried.

EDITH. Exactly. It is for the good of the unmarried. I just felt that you two girls, who have always been my confidents, my chums,—ought to be the first to know my wonderful scientific discovery. Now, as a staid married woman of exactly two years' matrimonial experience, I have felt it my duty to watch over the fortunes of all less fortunate. I mean—ah—all unmarried women.

FANCHION. That is—old maids.

RUTH. FANCHON!

EDITH. Now I find upon serious investigation that this delightful town of ours is simply full of adorable unmarried women—

FANCHON. Woefully full.

EDITH. And,—worse yet,—they all seem likely to remain unmarried. Isn't that dreadful? It's so strange too. They're all such charming girls. I'm sure it can't be their fault. There must be something the matter with the town. [*hastily*] Of course, I know that in your

case it's entirely different and if you girls wanted to, you could without doubt—

FANCHON. Don't mind us. Just go on. We are dying of curiosity.

EDITH. Well I pondered over conditions and worried over them. Finally I decided that there must be some solution to the matter. With this decision came a great resolve: I would devote every moment of my life to discovering and working out the solution. From that moment on I began to work and study. I read all the books I could find. I waded through tedious volumes on love and matrimony. I hunted up books of charms and magic. Why you do not know how I worked and studied. Indeed, I could think of nothing else. It seemed that my sole purpose in life was to secure the happiness of my sisters—for all womankind. Love, the most beautiful thing in life, finds its highest expression in holy matrimony and this love, by divine right, belongs to every woman and belongs to every man. It is unjust, and wrong if they do not possess it; for surely all people have some right to happiness. At last when I was growing weary of my search success came to me.

BOTH. Success!

EDITH. I suddenly discovered the great psychological principles which underlie the whole

great question. But more of that later. I shall tell you this great secret when the others come; for I have asked some of the girls over that they too might hear and profit.

RUTH. Oh please tell us at once. I am so anxious to know.

EDITH. Not now. Wait till some of the others come.

FANCHON. [*Stepping up*] We'll wait, gladly. [*she kisses her*] EDITH, you're an angel. Your nobility and unselfishness make us—

EDITH. No. It's not that. I just believe in happiness and in people. I believe in men and in women.

RUTH. Yes. We all should; though it is pretty hard to believe sometimes.

FANCHON. Don't you ever waver in your belief?

EDITH. No. I never have—[*with a slight start*] Yes, this very day—for the first time, I have wavered and questioned for I have been made to doubt two men whom I had always considered honorable and upright.

RUTH. Two men?

FANCHON. Who?

EDITH. I hate to tell you because it seems almost wrong to talk about. Yet you will know

before long for it concerns Eugene Wilson and Howard Smith.

FANCHON. Eugene Wilson!

RUTH. Howard Smith!

EDITH. Yes, I fear they are in trouble of some kind. They have both closed their places of business for some unknown reasons, and, strangely enough, without a word of warning have left the city together. No one knows where they are or what has happened to them. It is such a sad affair. Those fine fellows too; everyone respected and liked them so well.

FANCHON. But Edith, listen, it is different from what—

RUTH. Yes listen, please, you must see that—

[*The bell rings.*]

RUTH. FANCHON,—the bell!

EDITH. One of the girls already. I didn't think it was so late. Now I shall be able to tell them of my wonderful discovery.

[*Enter* KATE, *center, a rather severe looking girl who is dressed with extreme plainness.* EDITH *goes up to her and shakes her hand.*]

RUTH. [*Shakes her hand*] How do you do, KATE?

FANCHON. [*Shaking her hand*] Kate.

KATE. [*To* EDITH] You say you have something interesting to tell me?

EDITH. [*With animation*] Yes—ah—

KATE. [*Practically*] I'll be glad to hear it, but I hope it is nothing about matrimony, or anybody's engagement being announced. You know if there is anything that bores me thoroughly, it is this wild interest that most women take in weddings and engagements, and wedding breakfasts and all that sort of stuff. Really a person would think that the sole topic of interest in the world was marriage.

EDITH. Why KATE! Do you mean this? Can you—

KATE. Yes I do. There's this much about it, since I've taken up suffrage I have become fully convinced of the inane character of men. They're all alike, short or tall, fat or lean. I don't think much of the whole group in general.

EDITH. In general?

KATE. Yes, and in particular also. They're much the same. Take the case now of Howard Smith and Eugene Wilson—those models—weaklings like the rest. They've failed in their business, and now its common talk that they have taken French leave.

FANCHON. KATE!

EDITH. How can you!

RUTH. Dreadful!

KATE. [FANCHON *helps her to tea*]—Well, you certainly have heard by this time that they have—

[*The bell rings.*]

[*Enter* JANE.]

JANE. [*Weakly*] How'd do everybody. [*She drops into a chair.*]

FANCHON. Is anything the matter?

EDITH. How white you look!

KATE. Are you ill?

RUTH. How faint she is!

JANE. Yes—no I'm all right. Don't be frightened—I'm just a little bit upset. Overly tired, that's all.

FANCHON. Are you sure?

RUTH. Yes, are you sure?

JANE. Perfectly. It was just a passing moment. We all must have them, I guess,—a little joy, a little sadness, and—

EDITH. Now here you are sad, dear, and I had something to confide to you.

JANE. You were going to confide in me—to make me your confident? How generous you all are. What friendship and how selfish I am. EDITH, RUTH, all of you, I must confide in you. I must tell you my secret.

EDITH. [*Walking up to her and taking her hand, gently*] Do tell us dear if it will relieve and help you. We will be so glad to share your confidence.

JANE. I was ill—sick with fear. It was a striking resemblance. A man I saw, just as I was about to enter the house.

ALL. A man you saw?

JANE. Yes—I thought at first I had seen Carl Bently, but it was just some one who looked like him. Yet, in spite of myself, I was frightened,—shocked,—that's the reason I was not myself.

FANCHON. [*After a moment*] But JANE, we thought that Carl Bently was—

JANE. Nothing to me. This is only too true. The Carl of today is a stranger to me, the Carl that was, I love, did love, and always shall. You all know that we cared for each other from the first. We were so happy. Then he had to go away,—abroad—to make his fortune. How I prayed and hoped for his success. Then, one day I heard strange news—things that were unworthy of him. I thought they would break my heart. He came home at last. I rushed up to meet him, full of terrified doubts, great hopes and sad fears. He could not look at me. Oh, it was terrible. "It's no use", he said, "I've fallen

below your standard. I'm not good enough for you—I'm not good enough." That was all—the very end of my little love affair. [*tremulous*-It's rather pathetic isn't it? [EDITH *fondles her.*]

KATE. The poor thing. [*vehemently*] Oh these men! [*After a moment, she starts excitedly to serve* JANE *a cup of tea.—Next moment the bell rings.*]

[*Enter* BELL *and* GRACE. *They shake hands with the others and exchange greetings.*]

EDITH. Welcome, I'm so glad that you could come.

GRACE. Don't mention it. Say have you heard the news about Eugene and Howard? Perfectly shocking!

ALL. What is it?

GRACE. They've absconded, both of them. Perfectly atrocious. It seems they'd been planning on this terrible deed for months and months.

ALL. [*Shocked*] No!

GRACE. And they had cleverly enticed the money out of several of their patrons, and then straightway used it for some enterprises of the worst character possible. Simply dreadful!

KATE. Just like men.

GRACE. Indeed yes. Now believe me, I understand men. In my time I've had a couple

of little affairs of the heart that promised to be romantic, but the men proved absolutely impossible. They're so jealous of each other and everybody else. They don't try to cultivate the higher qualities, and I must say I couldn't make a constant companion of a person who is continually jealous, spiteful and gossipy. It would be perfectly impossible.

BELLE. Say GRACE, come here a moment. [*They wisper together.*]

GRACE. Say girls, she wants me to tell you about Emma Snyder. We met her down town.

ALL. You did?

GRACE. Yes. I was standing down at Allegretti's when I suddenly felt aware of the fact that someone was studying me carefully. It was Emma. She began with the tip of my shoes and then inspected every other part of my dress and person in due order. Finally she reached my eyes, and well,—that completed her inspection.

BELLE. That's just like Emma, girls. Why do you know what Aunt Carrie said once about her? You know Aunt Carrie was always noted for the clever things she said and she deserved the credit. Well when Aunt Carrie was young she went to boarding school. There she learned a great deal about men,—decorum and such

things. It was there you know, that she heard the famous rule: Girls must always know when to talk and when to be silent, or they wont give the man a chance. And so of course it is—

[*The bell rings.*]

[*Enter* IDA, HELEN *and* SUSAN.]

EDITH. Everyone's here now. Glad to see you HELEN,—IDA, and you SUSAN. I've brought you all here to tell you a wonderful secret.

IDA. Secret! Speaking of secrets, let me tell you one.

ALL. What is it?

IDA. I had a delightful flirtation on the way down here. A handsome fellow, well groomed, with an air. Ah it was fascinating. Oh, I could go through life flirting and flirting and flirting. I never could marry. One man would bore me so.

EDITH. How can you. Don't you know that the right man, the man you really love is a never-ending source of change, interest and happiness? Those who really love each other are continually discovering new talents, new beauties and purposes—

IDA. How you philosophize. But have your way. I'd rather practice on twenty men than theorize on one.

SUSAN. I don't see how you can talk about men any way. They're all right, of course, in their place, but they are certainly in the way when one really wants to accomplish something. Now I have my art, my paints and my palette. I want to do great things, unhampered,—free. Why I wouldn't marry the best man living.

HELEN. Nor would I. [*affectedly*] Literature is the great inspiring element of my life. I have my career, my books, my poems, my papers. That is sufficient. Why even now I am writing a great novel from real life. It's all about Eugene Wilson and Howard Smith,—their defection, misdeeds and how they escaped from justice.

BELLE. I tell you, no book could do them justice. Those men ought to be tarred and feathered.

KATE. That's too good for them. Such a terrible theft is without precedent.

IDA. I never would have thought it. They seemed too nice looking to be so wicked.

JANE. I hear this is not the first offense.

SUSAN. No they hint at still more awful things.

GRACE. They say they have gone through the entire catalogue of crime.

ALL. Shocking

Unbelieveable
Perfectly horrible [*ad. lib.*]
Beyond words
Crimes, crimes.

[*At the left meanwhile a little pantomime occurs between* FANCHON *and* RUTH, *who are trying to persuade* EDITH *to do something. Finally they gently push her forward.*]

EDITH. [*Watches them all a moment and says finally*] Listen, please listen, my friends. I have asked you to come here to tell of a secret this evening. Do you care to hear it?

KATE. Yes, certainly.

GRACE. I'm wild to hear it.

IDA. And I

HELEN. And I

ALL. [*Talking at once*] The Secret.

EDITH. I was beginning to fear you did not care to hear it. And it is so wonderful and will mean so much to everyone of us. It is simply this: the scientific way to secure all—

BELLE. Pardon me, EDITH, what time is it?

EDITH. A quarter to five.

BELLE. Oh so late. I had no idea it was so late. I must be going.

JANE. I must too.

IDA. And I, or I'll keep my dressmaker waiting.

SUSAN. Yes, and I must take my lesson.

HELEN. Oh I have to meet the mission committee.

KATE. Mercy! And I must go to a mother's meeting.

BELLE. [*To* GRACE] Hurry GRACE or we'll miss the car.

GRACE. [*Rushing out*] Perfectly fierce.

[*All exit in haste, talking and laughing.*]

EDITH. [*With a gasp*] There! They're all gone. And they didn't even wait to hear the secret. No wonder they're old maids, every single one of them. [*with a start as she sees* FANCHON *and* RUTH *watching her at left*] Oh please forgive me, my dears. Really I didn't mean you girls, you're different.

RUTH. That's all right dear. We're engaged.

FANCHON. Yes, both of us.

EDITH. Engaged?

FANCHON. Yes.—We couldn't have listened so calmly, you know, if we hadn't been.

EDITH. To whom?

FANCHON. Eugene Wilson.

RUTH. Howard Smith.

EDITH. What! to them?

FANCHON. Yes, they are really all right, in spite of all the scandal you just heard about them.

RUTH. You see we wanted to explain to you, but didn't get a chance. All this has been caused by their selling out. They have gone into business together,—mining. One of those sudden great opportunities.

RUTH. They are both in California now looking over the mine. Isn't it splendid?

EDITH. [*Grasps their hands*] Just splendid. Tell me all about it,—all the particulars. [*they start to exit*] It is such a complete surprise. Oh, tell me, at once, when will you have your weddings? [*Exeunt talking.*]

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